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Excerpts From Testimony on Antimissile

URDAY, MARCH 22, 1969

System Before Foreign

Relations Panel

Following are excerpts from a transcript of testimony on the Safeguard antimissile system before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times with the assistance of the facilities of A.B.C. News.

The testimony included statements by Senator Albert Gore, Democrat of Tennessee; Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird; questions and comments by Senator J. W. Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, the committee chairman; and by Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey, and a prepared statement by Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, read by Senator Fulbright.

Gore Statement

The Constitution places upon Congress the responsibility of providing for our common defense. The President is, of course, the country's chief magistrate and Commander in Chief. Thus the responsibility for the security of the country is shared. And it is the greatest responsibility of all.

The destructiveness of nuclear war makes the avoidance of war between nuclear powers the only measure of our security, as you so ably said yesterday, Mr. Secretary.

Never before have two great nations had such a mutuality of interests as now exists between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is the mutuality of self-preservation — the first law of nature and man.

This places a very high value on deterrence — deterrence to the initiation of war. This equation of deterrence has particular application today between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Secretary Packard said yesterday that the Chinese threat is not much farther along today than it was three years ago. So what we're really talking about, Mr. Secretary, and American citizens, is the equation between the United States and Russia.

Security Seen Endangered

Your principal argument yesterday, Mr. Secretary was that the deployment of the ABM's around two missile sites—one in Montana and one in North Dakota — was necessary to preserve the integrity of our deterrence.

Now when this matter is considered in its board context, it is — in my opinion — that the program you recommend would endanger our security. It would make armaments limitation agreement more difficult if not impossible to attain, and thus, ultimately, could degrade our deterrence.

And thus, Mr. Secretary, on this, your principal point, I join issue on facts. What are the components of our deterrence? I will list them in the order of their importance, as I understand it — and you and I have worked together for a long while, and many years, in this field.

First, our nuclear missile submarines. We have 41 such submarines. Each of these 41 submarines carries 16 Polaris missiles — among our newest and most accurate. So we now have 656 Polaris missiles, any one of which can be fired upon one of the approximately 200 towns and cities in the Soviet Union.

6,000 Missiles Foreseen

Soon the Polaris missile will be replaced with the Poseidon. Each Poseidon missile can have 10 nuclear warheads. Then, from the depths of the ocean, more than 6,000 nuclear missiles can be rained upon the Soviet Union.

We have about 1,000 Minutemen, of which 350 or thereabouts, are in silos near the two missile sites in Montana and North Dakota, about which you have proposed to deploy the antiballistic missile system.

And soon, it should be added, these 1,000 Minutemen can have 3,000 warheads if the MERV program continues.

Then we have 7,000 tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, and still another number of nuclear weapons — which I cannot cite — at other foreign bases.

In addition, we have about 1,000 warheads that can be carried by bombers.

What country—in the face of all this devastating, destructive power—would consider that it could launch a nuclear attack upon the United States without suffering utter devastation in retaliation. It would be utter madness.

'In Search of a Mission'

Now in spite of the fact that each submarine may soon have the capability of destroying 150 cities, and we now have—let me repeat—41 of these plying the oceans of the world, each one of which can destroy 150 cities, you insist that we must deploy an antiballistic missile around two missile sites in Montana and North Dakota.

Mr. Secretary, is your case

a mere rationalization? It has been well said that this ABM system is a defense in search of a mission. We have heard every possible kind of argument for it. And some of these are contradictory.

We were told at first that we had to have an ABM because of the Chinese threat. The Chinese do not even have ICBM's. They can't even hit the Pacific Ocean, let alone a missile silo in Montana.

Next it was said that we had to have an ABM because of the Russians had an ABM of their own around Moscow. But now it's clear that his system is mostly of the kind that we considered obsolete years ago, and that it has only 67 interceptors to stop our thousands of warheads.

We were told next that we had to have an ABM because the Russians were building a missile defense throughout Russia. But now it is clear that this Tallinn system has no significant capability against missiles.

Until a few weeks ago — or maybe it was a few days ago — we were told by the Joints Chiefs of Staff that our security required deployment of ABM's around 25 or 50 cities to protect our people.

Protests Over Sites

Now, all of a sudden, apparently because of a commotion in Boston and Seattle, we're told that defense of the people in our cities is impractical and impossible. We are told that we must begin to deploy the ABM so that we can test its operational capability — something that can better be done at Kwajalein where our test facilities are.

Finally, we are told that we have to protect our deterrence. But this proposal would, at the very best or very most, involve only a very small fraction of our nuclear weapon deterrence.

Mr. Secretary, if, in fact, this is a weapons system searching for a mission, it surely has not yet found it. Former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, in a speech a few days ago, said, "The hard fact is that we may never again expect to be in as favable a position as we now enjoy for entry into talks about a freeze in strategic nuclear armaments."

Now we have just ratified a treaty — the nuclear nonproliferation treaty — which obligates us to enter into good faith negotiations for limitations of the nuclear armaments race. Yet here another escalation in the nuclear armaments race is proposed.

Therefore, gentlemen of this committee, I suggest that this is a matter of highest priority. The very epitome of our duty and jurisdiction. We want to know and we should know why the negotiations have not started. Is it wise to make these talks about our very survival dependent upon a settlement in the Middle East and the solving of the difficult problems in Southeast Asia.

Our real security — let me repeat — our real security rests in stopping the nuclear armaments race, not in promoting it.

Laird Statement

Mr. chairman, we must rely on deterrence to insure that nuclear war doesn't start in the first place. This is the important thing. In order to deter an attack we must be positive and the Soviet Government must be positive that a substantial number of our long-range missiles and bombers will survive the kind of attack that you were talking about or any attack and then destroy the attacker as a modern society. We must have that capability and must have it in a credible fashion.

The Soviet Union today is building at a rapid rate the kinds of weapons which could be used to erode our essential deterrent force. They are installing many SS-9 intercontinental ballistic ICBM's, a large 20- to 25-megaton warhead capable of being carried on this particular missile.

It is an accurate weapon with this large warhead. We must give very serious consideration as to why this was being deployed as late as December of this last year.

With improvements in the accuracy and a continued increase in numbers the Soviet missile force could gain real effectiveness against our Minutemen. The Soviets also can build nuclear submarines at a rate of one per month. They are now building seven per year, which could come close to our shores and attack at short range, many of our missiles and bomber bases.

They are also working hard on a fractional orbital bombardment system, designed to reduce the warning time to our bombers so that they will not have sufficient time to become airborne. The Soviet effort is not just a future potential.

More Than Gross Numbers

As you will recall, former Defense Secretary Clark Clifford in his posture statement in January pointed out that in a period of a little more than two years—a little more than two years—the Soviets had increased their number of operational ICBM launchers more than threefold, from 250 in mid-1966 to 896 by Sept. 1 of 1968.

As of today the Soviets have in being and under construction more ICBM launchers than the 1,048 possessed by the United States.

The fact that the Soviets have virtually caught up with the United States in total numbers of land-based ICBM's has been interpreted by many as how successful the Soviet effort to achieve parity with the United States has been in this strategic defense area.

Of course, parity in strategic weapons, Mr. Chairman, is not a simple function of gross numbers in one category of weapons. Many other factors are relevant in measuring parity or equivalents in strategic nuclear power, and consequently the purpose or capability for which this force is assembled.

For one thing, the destruction which can be accomplished with nuclear weapons depends on many factors other than the numbers of launchers or warheads. It also depends, for example, on the size of the warhead and the accuracy of the weapon.

Accuracy, however, is less of a factor in structuring a retaliatory force strike against a city than in structuring a first-strike force strike against weapons.

In weighing whether the Soviets are increasing their offensive strategic forces to achieve only parity in deterrent forces we must take into account the fact that most of the Soviet's ICBM's are armed with significantly larger warheads than are the warheads of the U. S. missiles.

We must compare the 20- to 25-megaton warheads of the Soviet SS9 with our own ICBM warheads, which are only a fraction as large. Thus, the Soviets, by deploying as many ICBM's as the United States can potentially deliver a much larger megatonnage in its attack than we can with our ICBM's.

To keep the discussion in context, however, Mr. Chairman, we must remember that ICBM's constitute only a portion of the strategic weapons of either nation.

Another important factor is the relative concentration of population and industry within the target country. Or, in other words, the maximum number of targets which could qualify for a retaliatory strike.

Testimony of McNamara

Former Secretary of Defense Robert F. McNamara, in testimony before the Defense Appropriations Committee, as well as other committees here on Capitol Hill—and I remembered his testimony very well—made an authoritative report to all of us in the Congress in his annual posture statement.

He gave the relevant information on the comparative concentration of population and industry in the United States and the Soviet Union. This information in the form of tables was presented in classified form to committees of Congress in February of 1965. I am sure the members of this committee are familiar with those very important tables.

In essence the study showed that U. S. population and industry are far more concentrated than are the population and industry of the Soviet Union.

To give you the idea of the magnitude of the difference in concentration which Secretary McNamara showed, for instance, he showed that with 1,200 delivered one-megaton warheads, the United States could destroy 45 per cent of the total Soviet population.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union with 200 delivered one-megaton warheads could destroy 55 per cent of the U. S. population. These figures assumed limited fallout protection in both countries.

In other words, the Soviets with only 200 delivered one-megaton warheads could destroy a greater percentage of the population of the United States than our country with 1,200 delivered 1-megaton warheads could destroy of the Soviet population.

The charts show similar proportions when measuring comparative industrial destruction.

I use this material from Secretary McNamara's testimony because I believe it is relative to our discussion today.

Questions and Answers

FULBRIGHT: Well you say

it's relevant. I don't see that it is when the chairman stated a moment ago with your new developments we don't have 1,200 deliverable warheads but we have and will soon have around 8,000.

'Confusion' Not Relevance

Now what difference does it make that you draw a limited few, because everybody knows we have a higher concentration of population than the Soviet Union. So why is it relevant when we have so many more deliverable warheads? Because it seems to me it's confusing rather than relevant.

LAIRD: I certainly do not mean to confuse any member of this committee, Mr. Chairman. I am referring, as I said, to the missile force and that's what we're trying to protect. Now when you get into the deliverable warheads which our bombers can deliver you're into an entirely different part of the presentation which we will be making here today and this is important because the ABM is designed to give us that important protection that we need. And point No. 10A, when we get into this discussion directs itself to that point.

FULBRIGHT: Are you trying to frighten the people that we can be destroyed with so few weapons and that we have nothing comparable. We have more than enough to destroy not only a few but a lot.

LAIRD: Senator, I want to make it crystal clear that I make that point in this statement, too. I believe the United States today, and I don't want anyone in this room, in this country or in this world to question the deterrent force which the United States of America possesses today.

There is absolutely no question in my mind that we have the power. We have the capability as of today. But as Secretary of Defense I must be concerned about the time period of the 1975's and in that particular time period because of the developments that are taking place within the Soviet Union and because of the increase in the budget for military weapons in the Soviet Union.

Peace Talk Prospects

LAIRD: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we have sufficient strength today in combination with our strategic forces, our missiles, our bombers, our Polaris capability, to respond to any attack that might be launched against the United States.

As Secretary of Defense it is my obligation, it is my intention to keep it that way beyond any reasonable doubt. This is what the ABM discussion is all about. That is why we have no alternative but to protect our option to safeguard our deterrent force.

If the Soviet threat turns out to be, as evidence now strongly indicates, an attempt to erode our deterrent capability we must be in a position to convince them that a first strike would always involve unacceptable risks even at some future date, even in the mid-1975 period.

But if the Soviets should slam the door on an agreement, the modified ABM would permit us to continue steps toward the protection of our retaliatory force.

I would just like to say that this Administration is committed to end the war in Vietnam. We are presently engaged in very important peace talks in Paris.

There should be no question about that, but the point is, Mr. Chairman, we are presently engaged in very important talks in Paris.

I want you to know that we are hopeful that we will be successful in the talks that have gone forward in Paris.

But I do not believe that it serves this nation or the cause of peace in Southeast Asia any real good to carry on our bargaining, our negotiations, in public at this time.

I can assure you that every effort is being made not only through formal diplomatic channels, formally in the Paris peace talks, but privately as well.

And I do not believe that this is the place or that this is the time to carry out those kinds of negotiations and that kind of bargaining in public.

LAIRD REPLYING TO CASE: The last budget of the Soviet Union showed clearly that they were outspanding us in the area of strategic offensive forces by better than 3 to 2. It showed that in the field of strategic defensive forces they were outspanding us on a dollar-for-dollar conversion basis better than 1 to 3—about 1 to 3½, or so, depending on how you calculate their space program. But it's better than 1 to 3.

Higher With Space In

If you put in some of their space program, which really has a military aspect, you can go to a higher level. But take that space program out of there and you come down to a minimum of 1 to 3 or 1 to a little better than 1 to 3.

CASE: Just for the sake of understanding, what is the meaning of this comparison. Is it the same as I'd understood as is generally given, that is to say, it isn't the amount of dollars or dollar equivalent that you're talking about? It's the amount of hardware that is purchased?

LAIRD: I'm talking about dollars here as far as the equivalent is concerned.

Cooper Statement

The question which has not been answered satisfactorily by the Department of Defense remains the same: Is there any serious threat to the security of the United States or to the credibility of our nuclear deterrent from existing forces of the Soviet Union or Communist China or from the development of new nuclear weapons or from research and development?

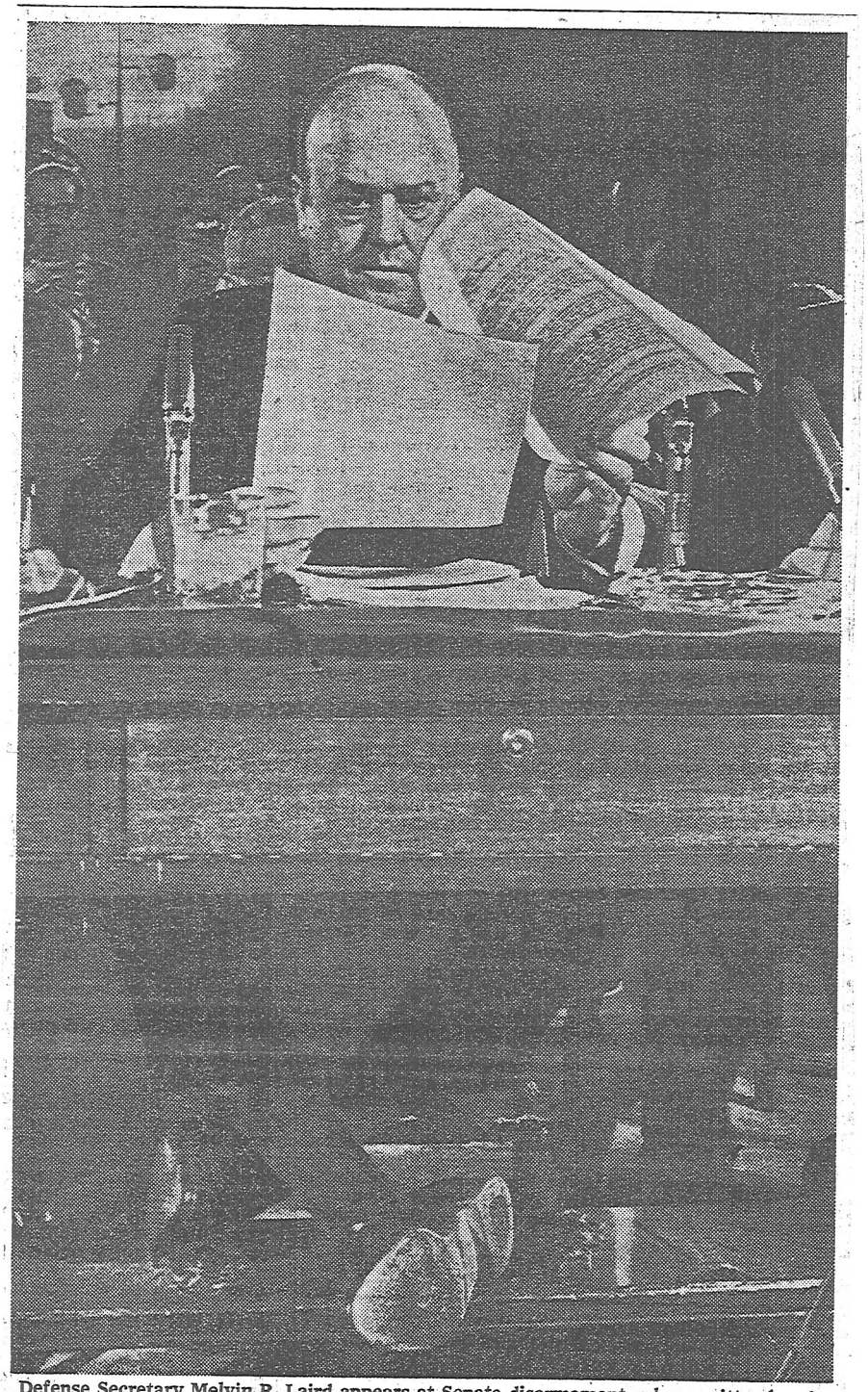
Is there any credible intelligence of imminent danger or such increased danger information that has not yet been public that it is now imperative that the United States commence deployment of a new system of nuclear weapons with the possible consequence of a new and higher level of the nu-

Call for Information

If there is such evidence that we have not yet heard, and we have been wellbriefed, Congress and the country should be informed before the Congress acts upon the bills providing authorizations and appropriations for deployment of the ABM system.

The bedrock question is whether the United States in the absence of agreed intelligence information of such danger will be the nation to take the first step in the deployment of a new system of nuclear weapons for both area and missile site defense which, if matched by the Soviet Union, as we much expect it would be, will set off an action-reaction pattern between our countries and vastly expand the nuclear arms race.

We should not take this initiative in the absence of certain intelligence information of danger and without an effort by our country and the Soviet Union to halt rather than deploy this new system. To do so could be infinitely more dangerous to the security of our country and its people.



Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird appears at Senate disarmament subcommittee hearing

The New York Times (by Carl T. Gossett Jr.)

Senator J. W. Fulbright posing questions. He wears visor over glasses to shield his eyes from the strong TV lights.